



Education Update

From State Senator
Tony Stamas

SERVING THE 36TH DISTRICT

Stamas Fights to Keep Sexual Predators Out of Schools

A sobering report released by the U.S. Department of Education estimates that 1 in 10 children will encounter sexual misconduct from a school employee. To make sure that every parent's worst fear isn't realized, the Senate passed tough legislation that keeps sexual predators away from children in school.

The legislation includes:

- Prohibiting someone with a sex offense from being employed at a school or day-care center;
- Requiring background checks on all paid school and day-care employees;
- Creating "Student Safety Zones" around schools that prevent convicted sex offenders from living, working or loitering within 1,000 feet of a school; and
- Requiring that school employees inform their administrators and the state about criminal sex-crime charges pending against them.

Nothing is more important than the safety and security of our children. I believe this legislation would help ensure our children can learn in a safe, positive environment. The bills have been sent to the House for consideration.

Senate Is Firm: Keep School Bus Safety Inspections

Alarmed that the School Bus Inspection Program was slated for elimination under the Governor's proposed budget, the Senate took the lead to keep the inspection program intact. In addition, my colleagues and I rejected the proposal to repeal the state law requiring school bus inspections.

Last year alone, state school bus inspections sidelined more than 2,000 of the state's 17,800 buses (nearly 13 percent) for serious safety violations. This is no time to eliminate a law that takes defective buses off the road. School buses travel thousands of miles each year and our children's safety has to be the number one priority. There is simply no way to justify the cost savings should a serious accident occur that could have been prevented with an inspection.

The inspection program is part of the Michigan State Police budget bill. All the budget bills have been sent to conference committees where the Senate and House work out any differences.



Capitol Tours Available

As a National Historic Landmark, our State Capitol draws visitors from across the country, but it also is an accessible historic treasure for our own students, teachers and families. Tours of this beautiful building, including the Senate and House galleries, are available Monday-Friday, every half hour from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. Groups of ten or more must schedule tours in advance, and classroom tours in the spring fill up fast! For more information, contact the Capitol Tour and Information Service at (517) 373-2353 or my office toll-free at (866) 305-2136. And, while you're in town, stop in and say hello!



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Did You Know?

The single greatest expenditure of the State of Michigan is the funding of education for children. The total for fiscal year 2004-2005 is \$12.5 billion.

School funding has increased every year except one since Proposal A was approved by the voters in 1994.

Michigan is one of ten states selected to receive an "Honor State" grant to help raise high school graduation and college readiness rates under the Redesigning the American High School Initiative. The state will use the money to expand college-level learning opportunities in high schools.

The Office of Safe Schools, established by the Legislature in 1998, offers parents and teachers an array of information on school safety. Visit the website at www.michigansafeschools.org. You can also learn about the toll-free school violence hotline (1-800-815-TIPS) at the site.



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Stamas Works to Keep Violent Videos From Children

It's a rainy afternoon and the two 12-year-old friends are busy...dealing drugs, killing police officers and beating up prostitutes. Well, not really, of course - they're playing video games, shockingly realistic video games. Recent legislation passed by the Senate would help keep such very violent and sexually explicit video games out of the hands of children.

The legislation would prohibit the sale or rental of ultra violent video games to children 16 years of age or younger in Michigan. It would also make sexually explicit video games subject to the same restrictions as similar adult books, movies or magazines. Penalties for knowingly selling or renting such material to minors include possible jail time, heavy fines or both.

These video games are widely available and often marketed to children and young people. The bills would help parents shield their children from these graphic products. The bill package has been sent to the House for consideration.

Stamas Delivers Books to Celebrate “March is Reading Month”

Young children throughout the 36th Senate District now have a special opportunity to enjoy the New York Times best-selling children's book, *Lost in the Woods*. To celebrate “March is Reading Month,” Senator Tony Stamas joined with colleague Senator Jason Allen and the authors to distribute copies of the book to area schools. Beautifully written and photographed by Michigan natives, *Lost in the Woods* tells the tale of a newborn fawn.

Each year, school children throughout Michigan celebrate “March is Reading Month.” The purpose is to highlight reading as a fun activity that children and parents can do together, while promoting literacy. In addition to distributing the books, Senator Stamas read to students in elementary schools in the district during the month.



Back to School Basic SAFETY TIPS

BUS SAFETY

- Have a safe place to wait for your bus, away from traffic and the street.
- Stay away from the bus until it comes to a complete stop and the driver signals you to enter.
- Use the handrail to enter and exit the bus.
- Be aware of the street traffic around you.

WALKING AND BIKING SAFETY

- Obey all traffic signals - never cross the street against a light.
- Mind the crossing guard.
- Walk your bike through intersections.
- Walk with a buddy.

For more safety tips and activities to share with your children, visit www.nhtsa.dot.gov. Click on the Traffic Safety tab.

Publications Available

The return of the academic year provides a great opportunity to teach the leaders of tomorrow the importance of civic involvement. In my office, I maintain a collection of publications to help teachers, students and their families learn about the Michigan Constitution, the legislative process and the organization of state and local government. If you are interested in receiving this material, please fill out the order form below and return it to my office. Or e-mail the office at www.senate.michigan.gov/stamas.

☐ Michigan Constitution ☐ For the People, By the People ☐ Citizen's Guide to State Government ☐ The Legislative Process in Michigan, A Student's Guide

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